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# CLAST Comparison, October 1989 and March 1990.

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ABSTRACT

In 1990, a study was conducted to compare the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) passing rates of St. Petersburg Junior College (SPJC) students with those of other Florida community college students and students from state universities. The SPJC samples consisted of 756 students who took the CLAST for the first time in October 1989 and 1,134 students who took the CLAST in March 1990. Study findings included the following: (1) among the 1990 cohort, 63% of the SPJC students, 49% of community college students statewide, and 77% of the state university students passed all four subtests of the CLAST; (2) among the 1989 cohort, 66% of the SPJC students, 59% of community college students statewide, and 76% of the university students passed all four subtests; (3) community college students completing 60 or more credit hours had higher overall pass rates than did students completing less than 60 credit hours; (4) among 1989 SPJC test-takers, 57.4% were females, 89.9% were white, 70.8% were working towards an Associate of Arts (AA) degree, and 68.8% had earned 60 or more semester hours of credit; (5) SPJC students with less than 60 credit hours had higher pass rates on the essay subtest than students with more than 60 hours; (6) though the percentage of students passing all four subtests increased as grade point average (GPA) increased, having a high GPA did not guarantee CLAST success nor did having a low GPA mean that a student would not pass all four subtests; and (7) no student who had three or four subtests to retake passed all areas successfully. (GFW)

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# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ABSTRACTS

*St. Petersburg Junior College*

CLAST Comparison
October 1989 and March 1990

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*Volume 5, Number 1* *August, 1990*

# CLAST Comparison

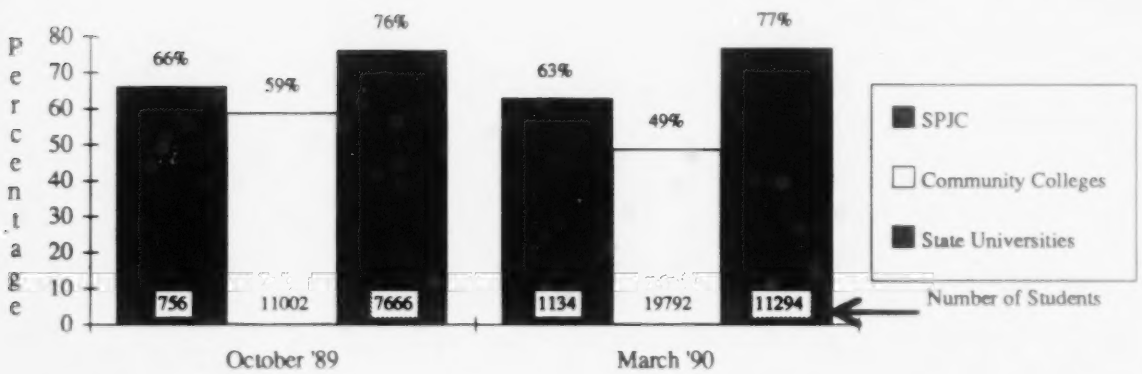
## October 1989 and March 1990

The CLAST cut-off scores were raised in August 1989 in three of the four subtests: Reading from 270 to 295, Writing from 270 to 295, Mathematics from 275 to 285. The cut-off score for the Essay subtest has been four since 1986. This paper examines the scores of SPJC students taking CLAST subtests in October 1989 and March 1990, since the standards were raised.

One thousand one hundred thirty-four (1,134) St. Petersburg Junior College students took all four CLAST subtests for the first time in March 1990 achieving a passing rate of 63% compared to the 756 students who took the examination in October 1989 with a passing rate on all subtests of 66%. Graph 1 compares the passing rate of the SPJC first-time-tested students with like groups in the 28 community colleges and the nine state universities. The percent of first-time-tested SPJC students who passed the four CLAST subtests exceeded the comparison group of community college students for both test dates.

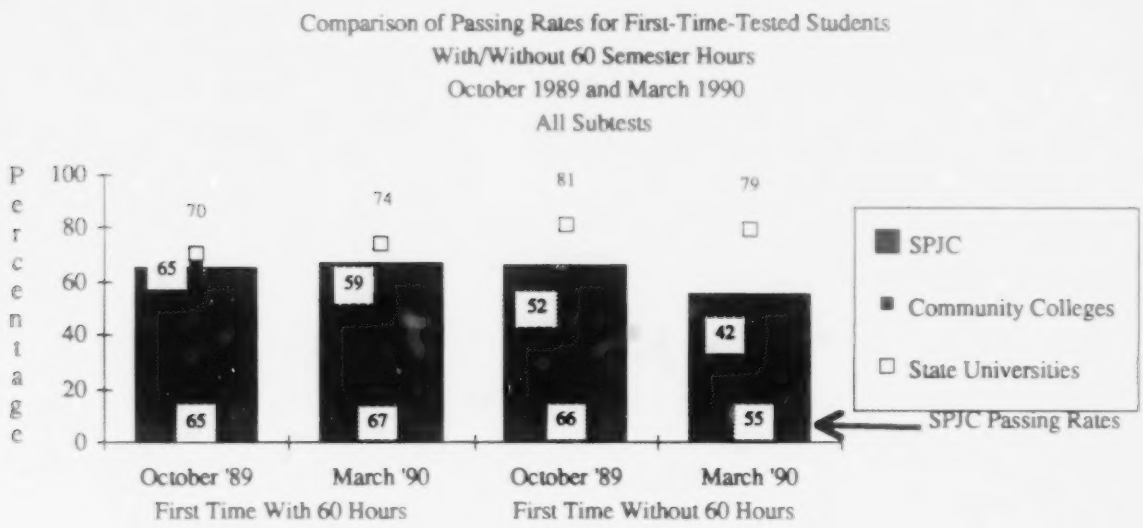
GRAPH 1

Comparison of CLAST Passing Rates on All Subtests
First-Time-Tested Students
October 1989 and March 1990



The passing rates on all subtests of first-time-tested students completing 60 semester hours or more are compared with those of students who completed fewer than 60 semester hours in Graph 2. In this graph the columns represent SPJC passing rates and the points represent the passing rates of students in all community colleges or all state universities. The percent of SPJC students who passed the four subtests equaled or exceeded the comparison groups of community college students for both the October 1989 and the March 1990 administrations of CLAST. A general pattern appears to be emerging that indicates community college students with 60 hours or more appear to have a greater chance of passing all CLAST subtests on the first attempt. The reverse is true for students at state universities.

GRAPH 2




## COMPARISON OF MEAN SCALED SCORES FOR OCTOBER 1989 AND MARCH 1990 SUBTESTS

When all the SPJC first-time-tested students were compared to five identified groups of first-time-tested students taking CLAST in October 1989 or March 1990, the SPJC student subtest scores exceeded all subtest means for the community college A.A. and A.S. students for each test date (Table 1). The SPJC student subtest scores also exceeded all March 1990 subtest means and the October 1989 means in reading and mathematics for the All Student Group, as well as the March 1990 reading means and mathematics means for both test dates for the University Transfer Group. The University Native Group means on all subtests for both administrations exceeded SPJC student scores.

TABLE 1

SPJC Mean Scaled Scores on CLAST Subtests Compared to State Scores

| | Essay | | Writing | | Reading | | Math | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Oct. '89 | Mar. '90 | Oct. '89 | Mar. '90 | Oct. '89 | Mar. '90 | Oct. '89 | Mar. '90 |
| SPJC | 4.90 | 4.97 | 316 | 319 | 322 | 326 | 309 | 308 |
| All Students | 4.91 | 4.94 | 318 | 319 | 320 | 321 | 308 | 305 |
| Univ. Native | 5.27 | 5.45 | 327 | 331 | 328 | 334 | 319 | 319 |
| Univ. Transfer | 4.93 | 4.99 | 319 | 320 | 322 | 324 | 306 | 306 |
| Com. Coll. AA | 4.74 | 4.72 | 313 | 314 | 316 | 316 | 303 | 299 |
| Com. Coll. AS | 4.35 | 4.07 | 304 | 300 | 309 | 300 | 292 | 282 |

## DESCRIPTION OF SPJC FIRST-TIME-TESTED STUDENTS

Table 2 describes the group of first-time-tested SPJC students for each test date. The majority of tested students were white females who were working towards an A.A. degree and who had taken 60 or more semester hours at the time of testing.

TABLE 2

Description of SPJC First-Time-Tested Students

| | October 1989 (n=756) | March 1990 (n=1,134) |
|---|---|---|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 42.6% | 43.7% |
| Female | 57.4% | 56.3% |
| Race | | |
| White | 89.9% | 89.0% |
| Black | 4.4% | 4.0% |
| Hispanic | 2.1% | 2.9% |
| Asian | 2.4% | 2.9% |
| All Others | 1.2% | 1.2% |
| Degree | | |
| A.A. | 70.8% | 72.7% |
| A.S. | 28.3% | 27.3% |
| Other | 0.9% | -- |
| Semester Hours Earned | | |
| 60 and over | 68.8% | 62.8% |
| Under 60 | 31.2% | 37.2% |

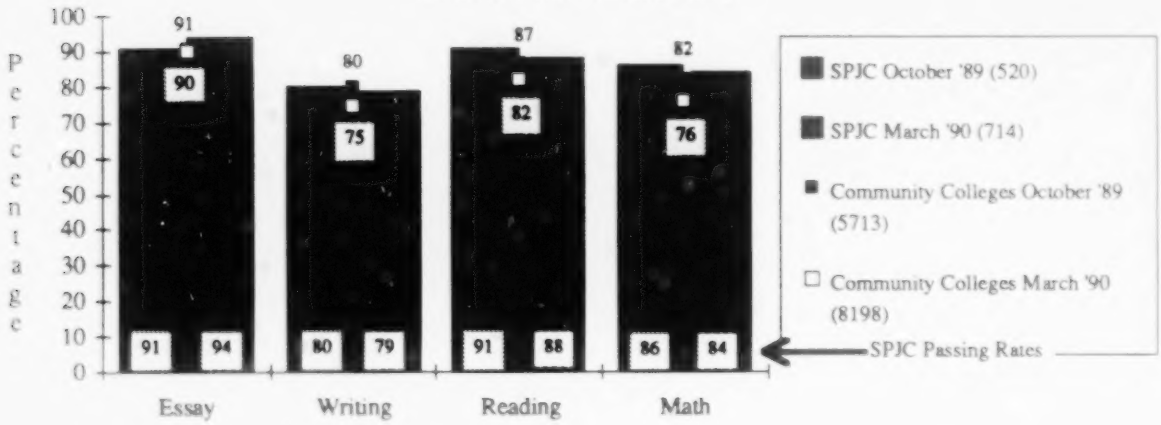
## SPJC FIRST-TIME-TESTED STUDENTS COMPARED TO ALL COMMUNITY COLLEGES GROUPS BY SUBTEST

Graphs 3A and 3B compare subtest scores of SPJC students (columns) with sixty or more semester hours and those with fewer than sixty semester hours to like groups in the 28 community colleges (lines) for both test dates. More SPJC students with 60 or more semester hours passed the reading, writing and mathematics subtests—but more students with fewer than 60 semester hours passed the essay subtest. The percent of SPJC students passing each subtest exceeded the percent passing in the community colleges group in all cases for each test date.

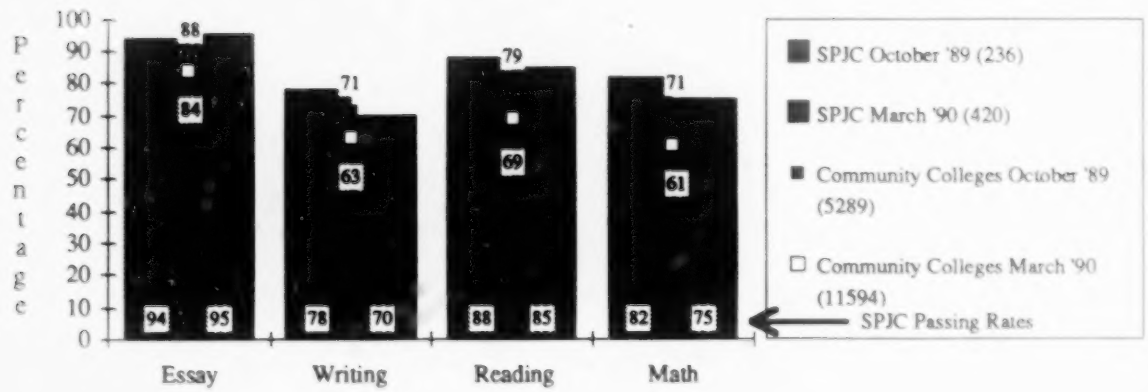
GRAPH 3

Percent of SPJC Students Passing CLAST Subtests Compared to Other Community Colleges
Based on Number of Semester Hours Taken
October 1989 and March 1990

A. 60 Or More Semester Hours




B. Fewer Than 60 Semester Hours



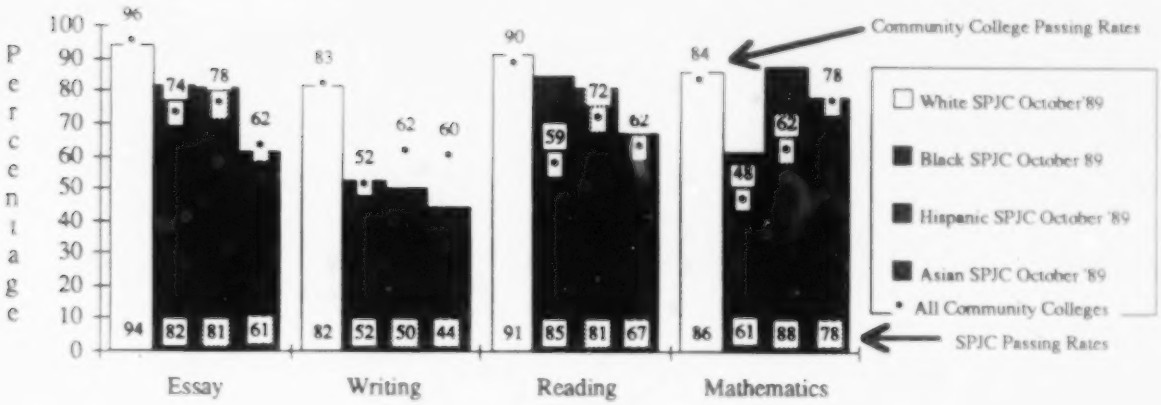
## SPJC FIRST-TIME-TESTED STUDENTS COMPARED TO ALL COMMUNITY COLLEGES BY ETHNICITY

The percentage of students passing each subtest on the October 1989 and March 1990 examinations were compared for selected ethnic groups in Graph 4. The columns show the percentage of SPJC students passing while the asterisk shows the percentage of all community college students passing. The percentage of white students at SPJC and all community colleges who passed the communications subtests - essay, writing and reading - was higher than for students in any other subgroup (for groups of the same test dates) except for the March 1990 reading subtest, where at SPJC the percentage was higher for hispanic students. Statewide, the percentage of white students who passed the computation subtest was higher than any other group for both administrations. At SPJC the percentage of hispanic students who passed the computation subtest was highest of all of the tested groups in October 1989, but in March 1990 the percentage of white students was highest.

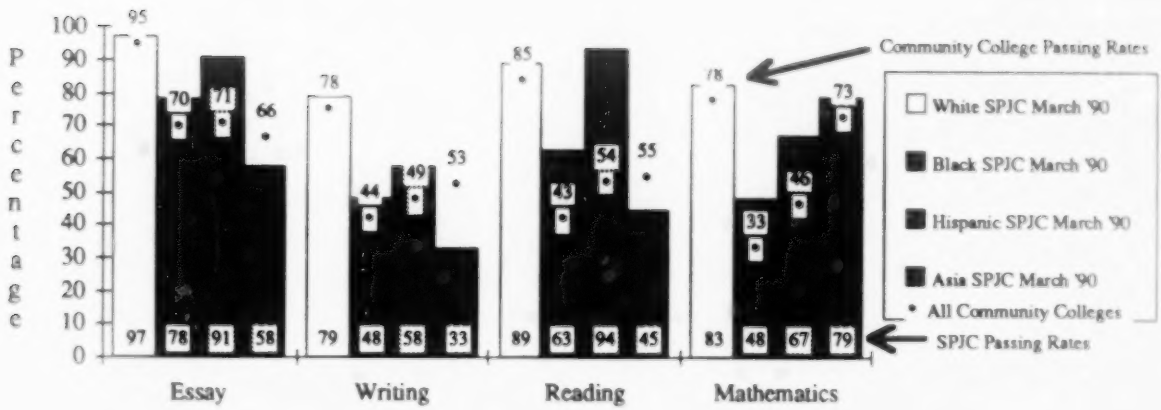
GRAPH 4

Percent Passing CLAST Subtests Based on Ethnicity
SPJC Compared to Community Colleges

A. October 1989



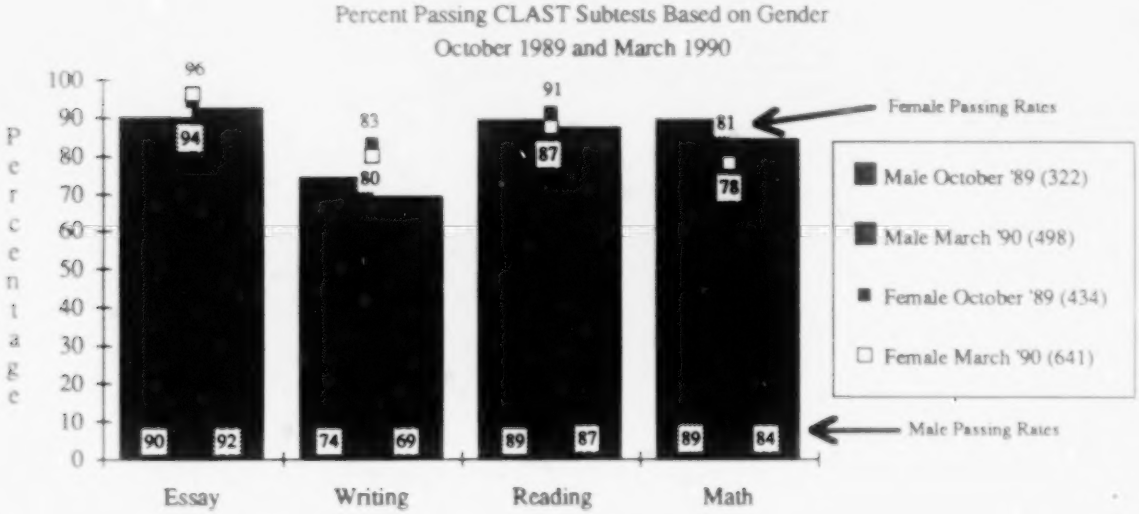

B. March 1990



## SPJC FIRST-TIME-TESTED STUDENTS COMPARED BY GENDER

SPJC subtest student scores for both test dates are compared by gender in Graph 5. The columns show the percentage of males passing October 1989 and March 1990 while the points show the percentage of females. The percentage of female students who passed the essay subtest was greater than the percentage of male students in October but equal to the percentage of males who passed in March. More female students passed the communications subtests - reading and writing - but more male students passed the computation subtest on each test date.

GRAPH 5

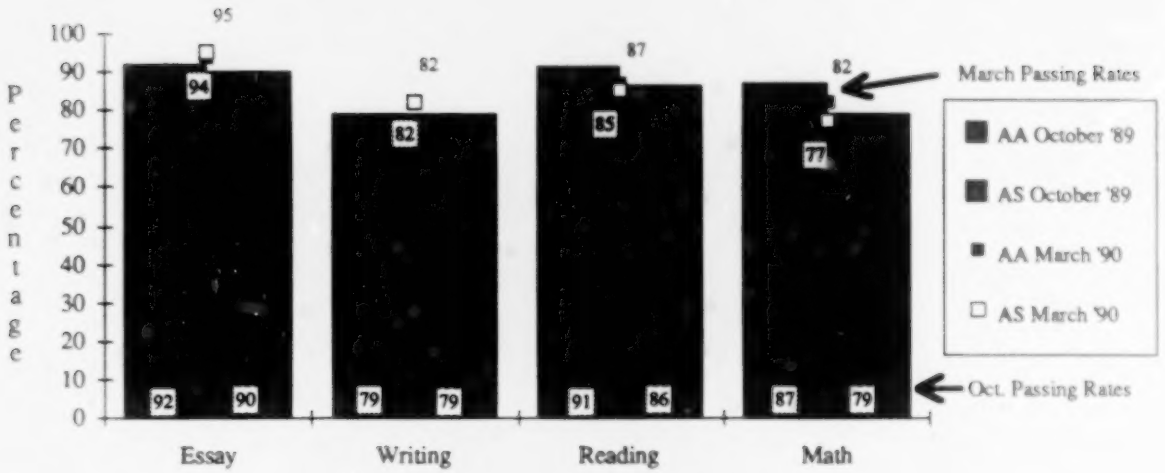



## SPJC FIRST TIME TESTED A.A. STUDENTS COMPARED TO A.S. STUDENTS

Graph 6 compares the percentage of students passing each subtest for each test date based on the degree sought. The columns show the percentages passing the October 1989 CLAST; the points show the percentages passing the March 1990 CLAST. Students studying for the A.A. degree did better on the reading and mathematics subtests than those studying for the A.S. degree; both A.A. and A.S. degree seeking students scored about the same on the writing subtest.

GRAPH 6

SPJC Percent Passing CLAST Subtests Based On Degree Sought
October '89 and March '90




In order to examine the relationship between passing CLAST subtests and GPA, the number of A.A. and A.S. students passing one, two, three or all subtests was examined. Tables 3A and 3B show that over 98% of the students passed at least one subtest for each test date. According to the data, having a high GPA does not guarantee that a student will pass all four subtests, though the percentage of students passing all four subtests increases as the GPA increases. Conversely, having a low GPA does not mean that the student will not pass all four subtests.

TABLE 3

GPA of First-Time-Tested A.A. & A.S. Degree SPJC Students Passing CLAST Subtests
A. October 1989

| | Number Tested | | Passed One Subtest | | Passed Two Subtests | | Passed Three Subtests | | Passed Four Subtests | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| GPA | A.A. | A.S. | A.A. | A.S. | A.A. | A.S. | A.A. | A.S. | A.A. | A.S. |
| 3.50-4.00 | 71 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 64 | 27 |
| 3.00-3.49 | 148 | 51 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 27 | 5 | 114 | 43 |
| 2.50-2.99 | 165 | 72 | 4 | 3 | 15 | 8 | 36 | 17 | 109 | 44 |
| 2.00-2.49 | 136 | 57 | 8 | 3 | 28 | 6 | 39 | 21 | 60 | 23 |
| Below 2.00 | 15 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Total | 535 | 221 | 15 | 7 | 54 | 19 | 111 | 46 | 351 | 143 |

TABLE 3 (continued)

B. March 1990

| G.P.A. | Number Tested | | Passed One Subtest | | Passed Two Subtests | | Passed Three Subtests | | Passed Four Subtests | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A.A. | A.S. | A.A. | A.S. | A.A. | A.S. | A.A. | A.S. | A.A. | A.S. |
| 3.50-4.00 | 127 | 50 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 114 | 47 |
| 3.00-3.49 | 230 | 72 | 3 | 0 | 15 | 3 | 37 | 11 | 174 | 58 |
| 2.50-2.99 | 278 | 99 | 8 | 4 | 28 | 10 | 68 | 27 | 171 | 57 |
| 2.00-2.49 | 166 | 81 | 11 | 11 | 3 | 12 | 45 | 17 | 73 | 36 |
| Below 2.00 | 28 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 16 | 3 |
| Total | 829 | 311 | 27 | 18 | 81 | 27 | 161 | 59 | 548 | 201 |

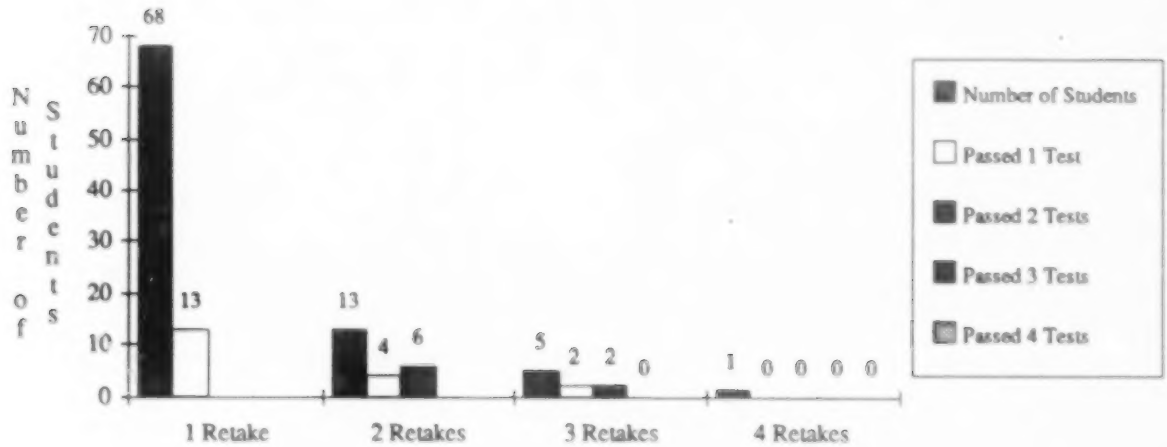
## CLAST RETAKES

Two hundred twenty-five (225) SPJC students were classified as retakes in March 1990 and 87 were so classified in October 1989. Graphs 7A and 7B describe the number of students who registered for one to four subtests and the number in each group who successfully passed subtests for each test date. The passing rate on all subtests taken was higher when a student had only one or two areas to be retaken. No student in either testing, who had three or four areas of retake, passed all areas successfully.

GRAPH 7

Number of SPJC Students Retaking and Passing CLAST Subtests

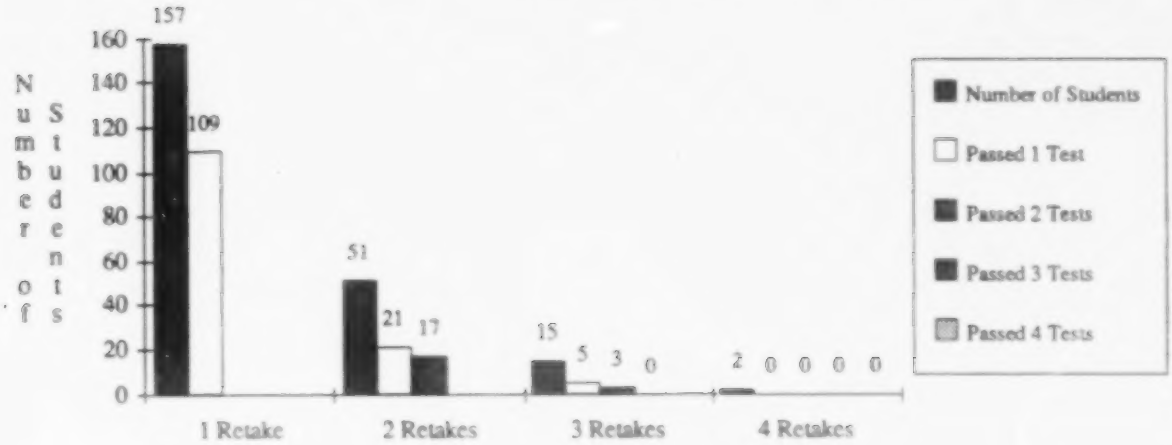
A. October 1989



GRAPH 7

Number of SPJC Students Retaking and Passing CLAST Subtests

B. March 1990




## CONCLUSION

The SPJC CLAST passing rate for first-time-tested students on all subtests exceeded the all community colleges group but was less than the state universities group for both test administrations. When ethnic groups of the same test dates were compared, the percentage of white students who passed the communications subtests was greater than any other group with the exception of the March 1990 reading subtest where the percentage of SPJC hispanic students was greater. Statewide, more white students passed the computation subtest than any other group. At SPJC, more white students passed the computation subtest in March 1990 but more hispanics passed in October 1989. More SPJC females than males passed the communications subtest; the reverse was true for the computation. Students studying for the A.A. degree did better on the reading and mathematics subtests than those studying for the A.S. degree; both groups did about the same on the writing subtest.

## QUESTIONS

1. What strategies can the community colleges in general, and SPJC in particular, implement to in crease their percentage of first-time-tested students passing all four subtests and bring it more in line with the state universities?

2. Students who have completed 60 or more semester hours at SPJC tend to do better on the CLAST subtests than those who attempt the subtests with fewer than 60 hours. What impact (if any) will the new mandate that students must complete 18 semester hours before attempting CLAST have on the passing rate of students who take CLAST with fewer than 60 hours?

3. Should special strategies be developed to assist students who must retake subtests?

4. How many students will eventually pass all subtests after successive retakes?

5. Do students fail to complete their programs of study because they cannot pass CLAST?

Please direct questions or comments about this Educational Abstract or suggestions for future issues to Susanne Fischer, Director of Institutional Research, Department of Institutional and Program Planning, District Office.



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